

# News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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## **HOUSE PASSES HOME HEALTH LEGISLATION** *Massachusetts Delegation Goes to Bat and Wins*

**WASHINGTON, DC** — U.S. Rep. Ed Markey (D-Malden) announced today that the U.S. House of Representatives passed the “Medicare Home Health Care and Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 1998” by an overwhelming margin of 412-2 this afternoon. Among other things, the bill adjusts the Medicare Home Health Interim Payment System in a way that benefits the vast majority of Home Health Agencies and Visiting Nurses Associations in Massachusetts.

Rep. Markey submitted the following remarks for the Congressional Record:

“Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this legislation which answers the call of thousands of seniors who have been harmed by an imperfect Home Health Interim Payment System. I want to thank Chairman Bliley and Ranking Member Dingell as well as our colleagues from the Ways and Means Committee for addressing the concerns expressed to me by hundreds of Massachusetts seniors and the Home Health Agencies and Visiting Nursing Associations from every city and town in my district. Under this proposal the overwhelming majority of agencies in Massachusetts, 85 percent of them, will benefit. No agency will lose.

“We are paying for this proposal in a manner far from perfect, but on balance this bill, which will put \$2 billion back into Home Health, will be helping the thousands of individuals and families struggling to cope with the difficulties of aging, as well as the health professionals who perform their work honestly, efficiently, and compassionately.

“I am committed to working with our colleagues to continue to crack down on fraudulent and wasteful agencies, but I also want to ensure that legitimate and efficient home health agencies, including the vast majority of those in Massachusetts, are not forced to close their doors and turn seniors away as a result of a flawed Interim Payment System. I yield back the balance of my time.”

Markey is the third-ranking Democrat on the House Commerce Committee and wrote to the Chairman and Ranking Democrat of the Committee last week asking that particular attention be paid to needs of Massachusetts seniors and home health agencies. The Home and Health Care Association of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Hospital Association support the House-passed bill.

Markey said, “This was a team effort. The Massachusetts Delegation went to bat on this issue for seniors in Massachusetts and won. I am hopeful that the Senate moves quickly to pass a bill so that we can guarantee relief to seniors and their families, as well as the home Health Agencies and Visiting Nurse Associations in Massachusetts and throughout the country.”